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ABSTRACT

Teaching English as a second language (ESL) to competencies requires that the instructional focus be on functional competencies and life-coping skills while developing the spoken and/or written English structures necessary to perform these skills. A step-by-step approach to develop and implement a competency-based approach to ESL for adults is outlined. The outline and discussion are presented in four parts: (1) a review of competencies and Adult Basic Education with special attention to the Adult Performance Level Study; (2) an annotated list of the advantages and problems of using a competency-based approach to adult ESL; (3) a program for developing a competency-based approach which includes identifying needs, writing competency statements, specifying the content of teaching objectives, and examples of lesson plans for teaching the same competencies at different levels and for sequencing competencies to spiral the content of lessons; and (4) a discussion of performance testing. A bibliography of suggested resources and an annotated bibliography of materials for use in competency-based ESL programs are appended. (AMH)

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Refugee Education Guide
Adult Education Series #12

Teaching ESL to Competencies:

A departure from a traditional curriculum for adult learners with specific needs

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ADULT EDUCATION SERIES #12:

Teaching ESL to Competencies: A departure from a traditional curriculum for adult learners with specific needs

Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....1

II. Competencies and the APL Study.....3

III. CBE and ESL.....5

IV. Developing a Competency-Based Approach for ESL.....8

A. Identifying Needs.....8

B. Writing Competency Statements.....10

C. Specifying the Content of Teaching Objectives.....13

D. Examples.....18

1. Teaching the same competencies at different levels.....18

2. Spiralling the content of competency-based lessons.....20

V. Assessment.....22

VI. Conclusion.....25

VII. Bibliography of Suggested Resources.....26

Appendix A.....27

I. Introduction

Adult learning theory has taught us that adults' orientation to learning is experience-centered; therefore, they do not begin by studying "subjects" which may someday prove useful. They begin by learning for and from the situations in which they find themselves. This is in direct opposition to our academic system in which "subjects" come first, and students are secondary. Yet a look at the titles and contents of the many and varied English as a Second Language (ESL) texts and materials which have been used to teach English to non-native adult speakers would quickly reveal that the language is typically viewed as an academic subject.

These texts are classified into four basic content areas — grammar, pronunciation, reading, and writing; each one, in turn, is further broken down into its component parts. For example, grammar texts contain verb tenses sequenced by complexity; pronunciation texts contain lessons on specific consonants and vowels; reading texts contain material whose level of difficulty is determined by sentence length and grammatical complexity as well as the number of new vocabulary items; and writing texts contain instruction which runs the gamut from how to write simple sentences to full-fledged essays.

English grammatical structures have traditionally constituted the basis of a majority of ESL programs in the United States. Thus, for example, ESL for the student whose aim is to enroll in an American university focusses on English grammar and/or writing (in addition to reading and studying skills), depending on the student's level of proficiency. Adult immigrants, on the other hand, who have a need to speak the language in order to cope in our English-speaking society, are given instruction in "conversational" English, which usually consists of grammar and pronunciation lessons.

The problem with most academic approaches to language teaching is that they may not provide a meaningful context for the use of language. Students of ESL are traditionally taught the grammatical "pieces" of the language, and how to manipulate those pieces, but they are not usually taught how to use the language for their individual communicative purposes. Although the situational approach, which gave us texts with unit titles such as "At the Doctor's Office" or "At the Post Office" was a step in the right direction,

lessons were still, for the most part, grammatically-based. Teachers had little more than a set of dialogues and lists of useful vocabulary words from which to create the necessary context for meaningful learning to take place.

In recent years large numbers of adult refugees with little or no experience with classroom learning situations have enrolled in ESL programs, making us acutely aware that our materials and approaches to teaching ESL are inappropriate and inadequate. These adults have an immediate need for English language survival skills as well as the minimum language skills necessary to obtain an entry-level job; they need language instruction which is both effective and time-efficient. Adult refugees and immigrants simply do not have the luxury of spending twenty, ten, or even five hours a week for one or two years in a traditional ESL program to learn the language; nor in fact, is there any assurance that a lot of time spent in such a program would provide these learners with what they actually need. Some adult immigrants, already schooled in grammar, who enroll in an ESL course to learn how to use the language appropriately, may suddenly stop coming to class once they recognize that their ESL class is not enabling them to improve their language skills or use the language more satisfactorily. Every adult learner has work obligations and/or family and community responsibilities which must be fulfilled; therefore, they are entitled to language training that is relevant, flexible, effective and efficient. Fortunately, two recent developments — one among language teachers in Europe, and one among adult educators in the United States — have helped to meet this need.

Functional language teaching, developed in Europe in the 1970's, is one attempt at making language learning more flexible, relevant, and effective. Designed for adult learners, functional language teaching identified explicit learning objectives which consist of language functions (such as giving facts, making a request, asking permission, making a suggestion, and apologizing) and are tied to topic-related notions. Students are then taught to use these language functions in various situations. Grammar and vocabulary are taught, but only as they are relevant to the performance of these communicative functions.

At about the same time as the functional approach was developing in Europe, competency-based education (CBE) was gaining popularity in the United States. Most commonly used as the basis for Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs, over five years of successful implementation has begun to convince ESL practitioners that the principles of competency-based education are appli-

cable to second language teaching. After all, ESL classes account for at least 1/3 of all ABE courses, so it should come as no surprise that teachers of ESL to adults would eventually turn to competency-based teaching as well. Teaching to competencies can be advantageous whether the skills being taught are for a high-school equivalency diploma or for coping in a new environment in a second language.

II. Competencies and the APL Study

"What is a competency?" you may ask. "Where did this concept come from?" and "How do I teach to it?" Since teaching to competencies is relatively new in ESL, we must take a look at the recent history of Adult Basic Education (ABE), and in particular the Adult Performance Level (APL) Study which generated the competencies that became the foundation for ABE curriculum development and assessment. This will offer a better understanding of what the concept of "competency" and "competency-based education" actually entails.

In 1971, the Department of Adult Education of the U.S. Office of Education commissioned a special study to identify the skills necessary for an adult to function successfully in today's society. This four-year study, conducted by the University of Texas at Austin, identified these skills by observing and analyzing the real-life tasks an adult needs to perform in everyday life.

The APL Study came up with sixty-five competencies an adult must be able to perform to function in society by integrating four basic skill areas (communication, computation, problem-solving, and interpersonal relationships) with five knowledge areas (occupational, consumer, health, government and law, and community resources).

Figure 1 (page 4) is an illustration of some of the types of competencies which can emerge when the skill areas are applied to the knowledge areas. The Communication skill in this table, however, has been broken down into three sub-components: 1) Reading, 2) Writing, and 3) Speaking, Listening, Viewing. This breakdown of the communication skill is especially useful to the ESL professional whose focus would naturally be on communication. Note that many of the tasks (for example, to "read a sale ad" or to "fill out a job application") are objectives that can and should be taught within the context of an ESL class.

Figure 1

* APL MODEL OF FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCY: SELECTED EXAMPLES OF TASKS

General Knowledge and Content Areas

Basic Skills	Consumer Economics	Occupational Knowledge	Health	Community Resources	Government and Law
Reading	read a sale ad	read a job description	read first aid directions	read a movie schedule	read about your rights after arrest
Writing		fill out a job application	complete a medical history form		
Speaking, Listening, Viewing	ask questions about buying on credit	follow job safety rules (directions)	follow a doctor's directions	use the telephone	describe an accident
Problem-Solving	decide which apartment to rent	decide which job suits you	decide when to go to a hospital emergency room	use stamp machines in the post office	decide which candidate to vote for
Inter-personal relations	relate to a sales clerk	succeed in a job interview		ask directions	interact with police successfully
Computation	compute sales tax	calculate paycheck deductions			

* (adapted from Kasworm, "Competency-Based Adult Education: A Challenge for the 80's")

Thus a competency, for our purposes, is a task-oriented goal written in terms of behavioral objectives, which includes language behavior. Once the competency has been identified, it also serves as a means of evaluating student performance. For example, that a student "can (or will be able to) use the telephone" (in English!) is a competency that we may teach toward and/or test. Of course, in theory, an ESL competency may have a purely language (structural) objective: "the student will be able to use the 3rd person present singular -s appropriately," for example. However, this is not what we are talking about when we speak of competencies here. This will become clearer when we discuss writing competency statements in Section IV.B.

III. CBE and ESL

As is probably evident by now, using competencies as the basis for curriculum design is a departure from the traditional academic view that language instruction be based on purely linguistic features. Teaching ESL to competencies requires that the instructional focus be on functional competencies and life-coping skills while developing the spoken (or written) English structures necessary to perform these skills. It is not what the students know about the language, but what they can do with the language.

Since there is no prescriptive methodology inherent in competency-based education, the instructor or program director is free to choose the most appropriate approach for the various client groups. This includes the possibility of narrowing or widening the scope of learning and varying the sequence of teaching. All instructors of adults should make optimal provisions for the differences in style, time, and pace of learning which will be encountered. This freedom of choice in language teaching methodology and the scope and sequence of learning allows instructors to take into consideration the individual differences which increase with age.

However, this is not the only advantage of using a competency-based approach to ESL; there are many more. But there are also drawbacks. In order for you to be able to weigh the pros and cons of teaching ESL to competencies, an annotated list of advantages and problems follows.

A. Advantages

Relevancy - By putting emphasis on teaching competencies actually required for successful functioning on the job, in life, or whatever, the purpose of the learning situation is never an issue. Adults are likely to learn more easily when the usefulness for common tasks is clear.

Motivation - In order to keep motivation high, language cannot be taught in isolation. For example, teaching the present perfect tense for its own sake is rarely a motivating force. By teaching to competencies, teachers no longer have to teach English in isolation from daily experience; natural contexts are provided. When the present perfect tense is necessary to perform a certain competency, then it is taught.

Concrete Goals - When the focus of an ESL lesson is a specific competency, students know what is expected of them, thus decreasing the natural feeling of anxiety when facing the unknown. After mastering the competency, the student is likely to feel a sense of accomplishment. In a traditional beginning ESL class, students rarely feel a sense of satisfaction because they haven't learned language that is immediately useful outside the classroom.

Having concrete goals benefits not only students but also instructors. Teaching to competencies decreases the chances of losing focus. It is not uncommon for an ESL teacher to be side-tracked into a pronunciation lesson while teaching a grammar point to students with poor pronunciation. However, when the purpose is a defined objective which entails a specific outcome, the chance of forsaking one skill in favor of another is greatly decreased. The teacher's focus is on the skill or skills which will enable the student to master the objective.

Flexibility - As mentioned earlier, competency-based teaching is quite flexible in terms of time. Students are not expected to learn the entire language (all the verb tenses, for example) before using it. Adult students have immediate needs, and the language needed for a specific competency can be taught and used immediately. Furthermore, competency-based ESL is also flexible in terms of the ways available for achieving your goals. Teachers

can use their preferred methods, materials, and techniques, or any combination of them. This also gives the student more variety, which is desirable since some learn better by one method than another.

Opportunity for individualization - Since there are no prescribed time limits, students can develop competencies at their own pace; some will master the competencies faster than others. Since many of the language skills required to perform a certain competency will be re-introduced in other competencies, the content of the lessons is naturally recycled. Moreover, students can develop competencies at their own level of language ability. For example, being able to request an item in a store may be a desirable competency both for students with 0-level proficiency and for students at a higher level. The language specified for the 0-level students may be: "Matches, please" (for example), but at a higher level it may be: "Do you have any matches? I need three boxes (or books)." This opportunity for individualization leads naturally to the fact that there are:

No failures - All students get several chances for mastery since teachers may use the performance of competencies as a basis for assessment. If students cannot master a certain competency the first time, they will be able to in subsequent lessons. As mentioned above, some of the language will reappear in different competencies. Thus, the opportunity for review and reinforcement of language skills is great. Moreover, the usually disastrous effects of absenteeism (which is always high among adults who have family and work responsibilities) can be offset; the student may miss the presentation of a language structure taught with one competency, but may pick it up when it is reintroduced within the context of another competency without being at too great a disadvantage. This is not true of the traditional ESL class; in that situation, if a student misses question formation (for example), he/she may not have another opportunity in the entire course.

Assessment is built-in - Since teaching to competencies is performance-based, assessment consists of whether the student can perform the competency or not. The only problem is to establish the level at which the student can perform the competency, i.e. minimally, proficiently, maximally. Since assessment is such an important part of a competency-based approach, Section V of this guide is entirely devoted to that topic.

B. Problems

Identifying competencies - So much is involved in successful performance (especially in terms of language skills), it is difficult to define the competencies associated with "success," or even proficiency.

No guarantees - Even if a student proves competent in performing a simulated task in a classroom situation, or in a task outside the classroom, there are no guarantees that that student will be able to do so when it is necessary later on.

Assessment - Although built-in assessment has been mentioned as an advantage, it can also be a problem because a true level of competency is difficult to assess. Moreover, a valid and reliable competency-based ESL assessment instrument has yet to be developed.

IV. Developing a Competency-Based Approach for ESL

A. Identifying Needs

Before deciding which competencies (and the language inherent in them) that you are going to teach, you must first identify and prioritize your students' needs. As mentioned earlier, adults come to class with goals, and class activities should be clearly relevant to those goals to encourage the adult student to learn.

There are several ways to identify the specific competencies your students need and/or want to learn. First of all, you can simply ask them what they need to know or are interested in learning; or you can ask them to respond to a list of pre-specified competencies. Another approach may be to ask experts or providers of services (for example, employers or social workers) what your students generally need to do. Or you may opt to analyze what people do in relation to performing certain activities, such as looking for an apartment or a job.

However, this is all very time-consuming, and unless you have bilingual assistance, you may not be able to directly ask the students what they want to learn; moreover, it may not be culturally appropriate. In addition, specific competencies are rarely applicable to all individuals. Location, sex, age, and ethnic background of the students will affect which competencies they need to be taught. For example, someone who lives in the city will need to be taught the public transportation system (bus or subway) whereas someone living

in a more rural area must first be taught about cars and drivers' licenses. Or a person who works or intends to work has different needs from the homemaker who has to interact with the community for daily necessities.

There are some textbooks which have been specifically developed for use in CBE/ESL programs. In addition, there are others which are quite adaptable for use with a CBE/ESL syllabus. These are listed in Appendix A (page 27) of this guide. Rather than beginning with nothing, you may want to use these as a starting point to develop the competencies that you will teach. However, it is important to keep in mind the purpose and level of your class when doing this.

Purpose

Keeping the purpose of your class in mind means you must decide what it is that is the major focus of your ESL class; in other words, what are you preparing your students to do with the language? If you are teaching an ABE or refugee ESL class, this may be divided into six possible categories: survival, literacy, basic skills, general vocational, occupational-specific, or home management.

For example, if your students are newly arrived in this country, they have immediate orientation needs. By focussing on survival ESL, you can give them the knowledge and language to deal with obtaining food, clothing, housing, transportation, and health care needs, among other things. If they are also non-literate, your focus should then be on giving them some basic literacy skills (such as reading signs, filling out forms), which is also an aid in learning more of the language. On the other hand, if your students are all in the job market, you should be focussing on teaching them the language necessary to get and keep a job; or if your students are women or elderly people who do not work, your competency objectives should include teaching the language of cleaning, shopping, budgeting, and emergencies, for example.

Of course, all the students in one class do not have the same goal. Some may want to get a job, while others may already have one. Thus, these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, your students may have a need for both literacy and survival skills, or both basic skills and general vocational English skills. However, you must know which areas you are focussing on before writing your competencies, for it would be very difficult to write competencies for all six categories at once.

For more information on what types of skills and topics are presumed by these categories, we refer you to our Adult Education Guide #11, Program Design Considerations for English as a Second Language.

Level

The purpose of your class is often (although not necessarily) tied to the level of your class. A good example of this is the student who wants to find a job, but, as a recent arrival with little or no knowledge of the language, needs to learn some survival English first. Similarly, a student with zero knowledge of the language may also initially be in need of literacy training. (For more information on teaching ESL/Literacy, see Refugee Education Guide, Adult Education Series #9, Teaching ESL to Non-Literate Adults.)

However, it is also quite possible to write and teach competency objectives at different levels, if you can identify what that level is. For example, in an ESL class preparing students for jobs, we can assume that one of the competencies is: "Student will be able to follow and give directions."

At a lower level, the directions would be simple: for example, open the door, stand up, sit down, raise your right hand, etc. At a higher level, however, the directions could be much more complex: for example, you may ask the students to "take 3 sheets of paper, staple them together, fold them in thirds, and then put them in an envelope." No matter what the specific content, you would still be teaching to the same competency.

After reading the following two sections, please see the chart in Section D which will illustrate this notion more clearly.

B. Writing Competency Statements

Writing competency statements may appear quite simple initially; however, it is important to make a distinction between the competency objective, which may be your ultimate goal, and your teaching objective. For example, your competency goal may be: "Student will be able to communicate with the doctor." or "Student will be able to use the public transportation system." However, in order to be useful, these general statements should be written in terms of teaching objectives, and as such, be more narrowly focussed.

The best way to achieve a more narrow focus is to begin with the topics you are going to teach — that is, the topics your students need to learn

about. For example, in a survival ESL class the following topics may be appropriate:

- housing
- food (includes shopping)
- clothing
- transportation
- money
- personal information
- telephone
- health
- emergencies

In a general vocational ESL class, however, the following topics may be taught:

- filling out job applications
- reading want ads
- work rules
- payroll and fringe benefits
- career exploration
- telephone
- transportation
- appropriate work behavior
- following directions
- job interviews

"Public transportation" is one topic you will want to narrow down into teachable objectives. The same is true of the other topics which will be relevant to the purpose of your course. You now have to prioritize these topics, according to your students' needs, and describe exactly what skills you are going to teach within each topic area. If you have noticed, the topics aren't necessarily mutually exclusive (transportation and telephone appear in both lists); however, your teaching objectives for those topics may differ.

The following are possible teaching objectives for some of the topics listed for survival ESL:

- Food
  - student will be able to identify common food items from each of food groups
  - student will be able to ask for these items
  - student will be able to read name and price labels
  - student will be able to purchase these items and verify the correct change
- Money
  - student will be able to count, read, and write numbers 1-100
  - student will be able to identify coins by name (e.g. nickel, dime) and number denomination
  - student will be able to identify bills
  - student will be able to give the correct amount of money upon request
  - student will be able to give correct change

- Personal Information
  - student will be able to give name, address, telephone number, and age upon request
  - student will be able to ask for others' name, address, and telephone number
  - student will be able to identify family members by name and relationship
  - student will be able to write name, address, telephone number, and age in appropriate place on form

As is evident, most of these teaching objectives can be broken down further; this is desirable in order to attain, or at least introduce, each teaching objective within one class period or less. This way the students always leave class having learned something, and you do not have to stay with the same topic (or competency objective) for so long that the students become bored and lose motivation. You can then go on to a teaching objective in a different (but perhaps related) topic area, and return to other objectives from the previous topic area at a later time. This builds in review and spiralling of content quite naturally. It also gives you flexibility and freedom from having to follow a strict sequencing which may not be appropriate to the needs of your particular students.

A chart of 5 competency-based modules in a possible sequence, included in Section D, illustrates this notion of spiralling more clearly.

C. Specifying the Content of Teaching Objectives

After having identified your topic areas and the teaching objectives within each area, you can begin to specify the language skills necessary for attaining these objectives. The following chart (Figure 2) is a good illustration:

Figure 2

Topic	Competencies	Speaking	Listening	Sight Words (Reading)	Writing
FOOD	-student will be able to identify common food items		I want a(n) _____. I like _____.(plural) Show me / Point to the _____. Give me a(n) _____.		
	-student will be able to ask for and locate these food items	Where is / are the ____? I need some _____. In Aisle (3). On the top / bottom shelf.	It's / They're } in the { dairy / meat / vegetable } section.		
	-student will be able to read food name labels			-tomatoes -carrots -lettuce -apples -milk -eggs -juice -meat -bread -rice (etc.)	
	-student will be able to make shopping list				eggs rice sugar tomatoes milk (etc.) bread

The four skills are listed separately; some competencies involve only one skill, while others involve more than one. Anything listed in the "speaking" column is also assumed in the "listening" column. When competencies do not involve reading (sight words) and writing skills, these columns are left blank. Organizing your curriculum and/or lesson plan like this prevents the introduction of too many skills at once, which overloads the students, especially low level ones. This way the students can focus their attention on individual skills as they come into play within the same topic area. (For example, note that the reading of labels is introduced separately.)

Figure 3

Topic	Competencies	Speaking	Listening	Sight Words (Reading)	Writing
FOOD	-student will be able to identify common food items		I want a(n) _____. I like _____.(plural) Show me / Point to the_____. Give me a(n) _____.		
	-student will be able to ask for and locate these food items	Where is / are the ____? I need some_____. In Aisle (3). On the top / bottom shelf	It's / They're } in the { dairy / meat / vegetable } section.		
	-student will be able to read food name labels			-tomatoes -carrots -lettuce -apples -milk -eggs -juice -meat -bread -rice (etc.)	
	-student will be able to make shopping list				eggs rice sugar tomatoes milk (etc.) bread

You may also want to specify the grammatical structures introduced in each objective in order to keep inventory of the structures encountered and make sure that your students get sufficient exposure to and practice with the same structure. Furthermore, you may also want to identify the textbook and materials, and even specify the activities needed to teach the objectives listed in the chart. Remember, you are not constrained by any particular teaching methodology or technique. You may use any approach in order to fulfil the objective. Your expanded chart may look like this:

New Structures	*Materials & Activities
	English for Adult Competency I - pp. 36-38. English for the 21st Century - Unit 7 Visuals Realia Total Physical Response Activity: Give me _____. Point to _____. Show me _____.
(Review: plural -s) count vs. non-count nouns some, a	English for Adult Competency I - p. 32 Notion by Notion p. 10 Dialogue Repetition and Substitution Drills Role Play
	Flashcards Visuals Matching Exercises (word-picture) (word-word) Realia (Food Labels) Total Physical Response Activity: Give me _____. (the can of peas)
	Hand-out: Vegetables _____ _____ Dairy _____ etc. _____ _____

*All textbooks listed here are given in complete bibliographic form in Appendix A.

The chart can be further extended with other information that you may care to clarify, such as minimal vocabulary, pronunciation problems to be drilled, and even cultural considerations (which include cultural orientation information to be given to the students in their native language, if possible). All of this, of course is optional.

Figure 4

Topic	Competencies	Speaking	Listening	Sight Words (Reading)	Writing
FOOD	-student will be able to identify common food items		I want a(n) _____. I like _____.(plural) Show me the_____. Point to the_____. Give me a(n) _____.		
	-student will be able to ask for and locate these food items	Where is/are the ____? I need some_____. In Aisle (3). On the top/bottom shelf.	It's/They're in the dairy/meat/vegetable section.		
	-student will be able to read food name labels			-tomatoes -carrots -lettuce -apples -milk -eggs -juice -meat -bread -rice (etc.)	
	-student will be able to make shopping list				eggs rice sugar tomatoes milk (etc.) bread

New Structures	*Materials & Activities	**Minimum Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Cultural Considerations (L_1)
	English for Adult Competency I pp. 36-38 English for the 21st Century Unit 7 Visuals Realia Total Physical Response Activity: Give me_____. Point to_____. Show me_____.	tomatoes cucumbers rice sugar eggs milk bread apples		- Explain to students which foods must be refrigerated
(Review: plural -s) count vs. non-count nouns some, a	English for Adult Competency I p. 32 Notion by Notion p. 10 Dialogue Repetition & Substitution Drills Role Play	oranges carrots lettuce meat fish	Plurals: /s/ /z/ /iz/	
	Flashcards Visuals Matching Exercises (word-picture) (word-word) Realia (Food Labels) Total Physical Response Activity: Give me _____. (the can of peas)			
	Hand-out: Vegetables _____ _____ _____ Dairy _____ _____ _____ etc.			

* All textbooks listed here are given in complete bibliographic form in Appendix A.

** Limit vocabulary to a manageable number. More can be introduced in Food II.

D. Examples

1. Teaching the Same Competencies at Different Levels

The chart on the opposite page illustrates a competency-based curriculum/lesson plan for teaching the same competencies at different levels. Not included on this chart is the identification of body parts, which may be a prerequisite or a part of the lesson at all three levels. Arrows indicate that the content of Level I is assumed at Level II, the content of which, in turn, is assumed at Level III.

Competency-based curricula/lesson plans written for different levels of language ability are useful in multi-level classroom situations, in programs which allow movement of students within and between cycles, and in programs where accurate means of placement are unavailable.

Teaching the Same Competencies at Different Levels

	Level I	Level II	Level III
Speaking	My (body part) hurts. This hurts. I'm / He's / She's } sick. / dizzy.	I have a ____ ache. He / She } has a sore ____. My _____ aches.	I have / He has / She has } a } pain. / cramp. in my / his / her _____. I can't + V. (bend down)
Listening	What's the matter? What's wrong? Take _____ aspirin(s). Stay } in bed. / home.	How do you feel? Where does it hurt? Take (something) 4x a day. Call me.	Are you in pain? Can you + V? -before / -after } meals
Sight Words (Reading)		-can distinguish between over the counter & prescip-tion medicine	- can read medicine label instructions
Writing			- can write note to teacher excusing child for absence due to illness
New Structures	Present Tense: BE (sing. forms) Present Tense -3rd person singular	Present Tense: have (sing. forms) Review: Plural nouns (-s)	Possessives: my / his / her (neg.) modal + V
Materials & Activities	A New Approach for the 21st Century Lesson 11 - Visuals - Dialogue - Repetition & Substitution Drills - Role Play - Total Physical Response: Simon Says	English for Adult Competency I pp. 51-54 - Realia (medicine bottles) - Visuals - Flashcards - Matching exercises - Dialogue - Role Play - Total Physical Response: -w/ (candy) pills	English for Adult Competency I pp. 60-62 Notion by Notion - Unit 33 -Visuals -Flashcards -Hand-outs: matching, fill in the blank -Dialogue -Role Play -Question-Answer Drills -Total Physical Response

2. Spiralling the content of competency-based lessons

The chart on the opposite page has purposely been left blank to focus attention on how sequencing of competencies (which is flexible) can spiral the content of lessons, creating opportunities for review, reinforcement, and the building of "success" experiences.

As shown here, students are first taught competency skills relating to money which surface again in Food I, #3 and Clothing I, #3; these skills are further extended in Food II, #3 and Clothing II, #3. Also note that the competencies listed in Food I and Clothing I are quite similar; the structures introduced to attain the competencies in Food I will be reinforced in the learning of competencies in Clothing I. Thus, the learning tasks become easier since much of the language is already familiar to the student.

Spiralling Content

Topic	Competencies	Speaking	Listening	Sight Words	Writing	New Structures	Materials & Activities
Money I	1) student will be able to identify coins by name (e.g. dime) and number denomination 2) student will be able to identify bills 3) student will be able to give the correct amount of money upon request.						
Food I	1) student will be able to identify common food items 2) student will be able to ask for and locate these food items 3) student will be able to read price labels on items						
Clothing I	1) student will be able to identify common items of clothing 2) student will be able to ask for and locate items 3) student will be able to read price tags on items						
Food II	1) student will be able to read food name labels 2) student will be able to read and use coupons for grocery items 3) student will be able to make food purchases and verify correct change						
Clothing II	1) student will be able to express and ask for appropriate size 2) student will be able to identify size tags 3) student will be able to make clothing purchase and verfiy correct change						

V. Assessment

Among the many advantages of teaching to competencies (stated earlier) is the fact that assessment is built-in. The task of assessing what the student has learned becomes clear, since the real-life teaching objectives have been specified. Performance of the stated competency clearly demonstrates whether the student is "competent" (has internalized what has been taught).

Yet, it will be very difficult to ask a student to perform a stated competency if the language used in writing the teaching objectives is not clearly performable. As discussed in Section V.B., teaching objectives must be narrowly focussed. It is useless to state: "Student will understand spoken directions," because you cannot ask students to demonstrate or perform "understanding." By the same token, you cannot state: "Student will be familiar with the local transportation system," since "being familiar with" cannot be performed. However, you can state: "Student will respond appropriately to spoken directions" or "Student will be able to ask about bus fares," since these tasks can be performed. Thus, it is very important to use language that is both specific and focussed when writing competency-based teaching objectives.

Competency-based assessment usually implies a departure from the traditional pencil and paper approach to testing in favor of performance. However, this largely depends on what the competency objective is that you are assessing. For example, to assess whether a student can ask or give directions, pencil and paper are quite unnecessary. On the other hand, if you want to know if a student can fill out a job application properly, pencil and paper must be used.

Competency-based assessment traditionally consists of pre- and post-testing; thus, the same testing instrument can be used both for diagnosis or placement in the program (whose levels may be determined by the various competencies which appear at different points in the curriculum) as well as achievement at the end of the cycle or semester. However, rather than waiting to test all the competencies taught in a semester, it may be preferable to do achievement testing at periodic points during the semester.

This kind of testing can be done either formally or informally through the use of a checklist, an example of which appears on page 23. You may wish to designate one day of the week or month as "Review" and then informally check off whether your students could perform the competency or not. Or you may

COMPETENCY CHECKLIST

(Example)

Student Name	Competency: Can Describe Own and Others' Feelings	Can Identify and Describe Parts of the Body	Can Identify and Describe Symptoms	Can Use Phone to Call Doctor
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

wish to announce the testing day(s) so that your students are aware that they are being assessed. Using a combination of both approaches to assessment throughout the course is probably best.

Some teachers feel very uncomfortable with this "can" or "can't" approach to assessment. What about the student who performs the competency (for example, requesting an item of food), but whose grammar is faulty? Should that student get the same check for "success" as one who also performs the competency, but with perfect grammar? The answer to that question largely depends on what the students' goals are and/or what you (the teacher) defines as "successful completion."

You may want to (perhaps in consultation with your students) set up a rating scale as follows:

0 - could not perform
1 - performs minimally (communicates, but lacks structure)
2 - performs adequately
etc.

However, if you opt to use a rating scale, be careful not to set up too many distinctions, which would result in the assessment becoming too subjective. As is obvious, this type of testing is not at all standardized, and would not meet strict testing requirements of reliability and validity. However, this type of testing does have face validity, and is a good indication of your students' progress as relates to your curriculum. Moreover, it also provides feedback on the effectiveness of instruction.

Competency-based instruments can also be used to test general <u>proficiency</u>. The Center for Applied Linguistics in conjunction with the Office of Refugee Resettlement Region I has developed a competency-based proficiency test of survival skills. This test consists of a core section which tests only listening and speaking skills, using visual stimuli. If the student attains a certain score on this section, a supplementary test of (survival) reading and writing skills is administered. This test, called the Basic English Skills Test (B.E.S.T.), will be available for purchase in Spring/Summer 1982.

VI. Conclusion

It is our hope that the concept and usefulness of competency-based teaching for ESL is now evident. We have attempted to outline a step-by-step approach for implementing a competency-based curriculum in your individual program or classroom; please keep in mind that all examples given are only models upon which to develop your own competency objectives, according to the particular needs of your students.

The mere knowledge of facts or information (the grammatical structures of a language, for example) does not assure the ability to function; thus, the ability to function adequately can be our only measure of success. Competency-based language instruction provides the framework for measuring this success. We must not forget that our goal for our adult students, whether they are refugees or immigrants, educated or uneducated, is to enable them to be self-sufficient and function adequately in our society.

VII. Bibliography of Suggested Resources

Adult Performance Level Staff. Adult Functional Competency-Final Report. Austin, TX: University of Texas, August 1977.

Issues of Adult Literacy and Basic Education. Auburn, AL: Auburn University (203 Petrie Hall)
(Note: see especially Vol. 3 No. 3 - Fall, 1979)

Berg, Joann LaPerla and Beverly Galley Schwartz. "Don't Bother Us...We Can Cope: CBE for ESL," The CB Reader. Upper Montclair, NJ: National Adult Education Clearinghouse, Montclair State College, 1980.

Fisher, Joan. "A Review of Competency-Based Adult Education," Report of the USOE Invitational Workshop on Adult Competency Education. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978. (ED 013 371)

James, Waynne B. "What APL is - and is Not," The CB Reader. Upper Montclair, NJ: National Adult Education Clearinghouse, Montclair State College, 1980.

Kasworm, Carol. "Competency-Based Adult Education: A Challenge of the 80's," Information Series No. 208. Columbus, OH: ERIC/ACVE, 1980.

Kasworm, Carol and Buddy Lyle. Proceedings of a National Invitational Workshop on Competency-Based Adult Education. Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1979.

Keltner, Autumn A. and Leann B. Howard. "The Integration of Competency-Based Education into an Adult English as a Second Language Program," Proceedings of a National Invitational Workshop on Competency-Based Education. Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1979.

Knowles, Malcolm. The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company, 1973.

Parker, James T. and Paul G. Taylor, eds. The CB Reader. Upper Montclair, NJ: National Adult Education Clearinghouse, Montclair State College, 1980.

Appendix A

Selected Bibliography of Materials for Use in Competency-Based ESL Programs

Ferreira, Linda. Notion by Notion. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1981. About $5.95.

A new beginning ESL practice book which is organized into 40 units which treat such notions as remembering, suggestions, and describing things, as well as survival topics such as health, food, directions, and shopping for clothes. Each unit also focuses on the language structures and patterns needed to express the particular notion; many exercises and activities for speaking, reading, and writing. A useful review of survival English; however, not meant to be used as an introduction to survival ESL for the lowest level refugee student.

Iwataki, Sadae et al. English as a Second Language: A New Approach for the Twenty-first Century. Arlington Heights, IL: Delta Systems, 1975-76.

Vol. I	Teacher's manual, Lessons 1-40, about $15.95
Vol. II	A — Student's book, Lessons 1-20, about $3.00
	B — Student's book, Lessons 21-40, about $3.00
Vol. III	Visuals for Lessons 1-40, about $16.95 per set
Vol. IV	(Transparencies no longer available)
Vol. V	Supplement for Chinese students, about $4.95
*Vol. VI	Intermediate course, about $6.00
*Vol. VII	Visuals for intermediate course, about $5.95
*Vol. VIII	Pronunciation Lessons, about $4.95
	Visuals for Pronunciation lessons, about $6.00
*Vol. IX	Bridging the Asian Language and Cultural Gap, about $4.95
Vol. X	Supplement for Vietnamese students, about $4.95
Vol. XI	Supplement for Cambodian students, about $4.95
Vol. XII	Supplement for Spanish students, about $4.95
Vol. XIII	Supplement for Laotian students, about $4.95

Cassettes for Lessons 1-40, about $119.00 per set.
Worksheets for Lessons 1-40, about $4.00 per set per student.
(* not available from Delta — originally published by Modulearn, these materials are now available from Bilingual Educational Service, Inc., S. Pasadena, CA)

A survival course, developed for Asian adult students on the West Coast, and for that reason particularly appropriate for refugee students, especially those with little or no educational background. The series has been widely and successfully used with refugees since 1975, both in survival classes and as the first lap of extensive programs. (Caution: Vol. VI, the intermediate course, does not take up where Vol. II ends!) The supplement for Chinese, Vietnamese and Cambodian students are translations of the dialogue and model sentences of Lessons 1-40 into the different languages. The teachers' manual is explicit, and written with the inexperienced ESL teacher in mind. The pronunciation lessons are aimed at Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Tagalog speakers, and do not tackle the particular problems of the Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong and Cambodian refugees; the visuals are useful in refugee classes, however. The worksheets were

designed to be used with the cassettes, but can be used independently as well. A separate literacy component was published by Modulearn in 1980, and another new literacy component from Delta Systems has come out recently. Both are designed to accompany the earlier lessons, and are described in this bibliography's section on literacy. Modulearn's literacy program is presently being distributed by Bilingual Education Services, Inc.

Keltner, Autumn. English for Adult Competency, Books I and II. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980. $5.00 each.

A language survival skills text which focusses on the following situations: personal identification, food and money, health, transportation, housing, clothing, looking for a job, banking and postal services, and community resources. The text is non-sequential and employs a minimum of structures. It emphasizes the oral language patterns and vocabulary needed in daily life. There are pre- and post-tests for each unit with functional/competency objectives; particular language structures are not tested. Book II expands the concepts of each unit found in Book I, and includes more difficult structures. The text is designed to give the adult student as much practice as possible. The only drawback to this text is the lack of a teacher's manual, making it an impractical choice for an inexperienced teacher or tutor.

Nelson, Gayle and Thomas Winters. ESL Operations: Techniques for Learning While Doing. Rowley: Newbury House, 1980. About $4.95.

This book, aimed at upper beginning and above, combines language with real actions in over 40 situations. In each section, the operations are sequenced according to difficulty; students must comprehend, say and do basic simple operations (such as set an alarm clock, pound nail, write a check). Useful for teaching comprehension of the basic command verbs (e.g. put, set, fold, raise, take, etc.) that a student would encounter in an employment situation. It also prepares students to give and follow directions.

Oxford University Press. Oxford Picture Dictionary of American English: Wall Charts. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979. About $25.00 per set.

A set of 25 16" x 20" full-color vocabulary charts which are enlargements of particular illustrations from the Oxford Picture Dictionary. Pictures are on one side and the keyed vocabulary words are listed on the other. The emphasis is on high-frequency vocabulary; these charts are excellent for class use at almost any level.

Parnwell, E.C. Oxford Picture Dictionary of American English. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. About $3.95 per book.

A delightful picture dictionary for adults that has proved to be very popular with refugees of all ages and levels of English. The pictures are either scenes (e.g. a depiction of a downtown area) with the various elements labelled, or pictures of individual objects (e.g. animals, vegetables). The pictures are line drawings with colors, simple enough to be clear but detailed enough to be explicit. All in all, about 2,000 words are illustrated. There is an index of all the words in back, with a

guide to pronunciation. The dictionary is available with just English words; with English and Spanish words; or with English words plus a French index.

Romijn, Elizabeth and Contee Seely. Live Action English for Foreign Students. San Francisco: Alemany Press, 1979. About $3.95.

Although not a complete course, this book is a useful supplement to other materials aimed at beginning and intermediate students. One of the first books based on Total Physical Response, it consists of 66 series of commands to be acted out and produced by the students. These commands are based on survival situations (e.g. grocery shopping, using a pay phone) and survival vocabulary (e.g. washing your hands, changing a light bulb) and vary in level of difficulty. Detailed directions for instructors and suggestions for adaptation are included.

Savage, K. Lynn et al. English That Works. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co. (Lifelong Learning Division), 1982.

Books 1-2, about $3.30 each
Instructor's Guides, about $5.50 each
Cassettes 1-2, about $65.00 (set of 6 tapes)
Flashcards, about $35.00 (set of 150)
Cultural Notes 1-2, about $1.20 each

Although designed for a pre-vocational or vocational ESL course, we are listing this series in this section because it is definitely to be used as a course text. Described as an integrated, competency-based, bilingual, vocational ESL program, this new series combines low-level ESL skills with task-oriented objectives, giving the adult student the English he/she needs to get and keep a job. Each book is accompanied by a separate (optional) Cultural Notes booklet which gives essential information about cultural values, customs, vocabulary, etc. in Spanish, Chinese, or Vietnamese. The Instructor's Guide is complete and very useful. Although newly-arrived refugees may find this series fast-paced, many ESL teachers find that this is the answer for students who, after a basic survival ESL course, want to ready themselves for the job market.

Schurer, Linda (editor). Everyday English. San Francisco: Alemany Press, 1979.

Cycle I — Student book, about $4.95
Teacher's manual, about $9.95
Cycle II — Student book A, about $3.95
Student book B, about $3.95
Teacher's manual, about $9.95

Designed as an introductory oral English program for recently arrived adult immigrants with little or no previous knowledge of English, these ESL teaching materials have been quite successful with the refugee adult of low educational background. The goal is survival English for immediate use. Based on a cyclical curricular design, Cycle I consists of 10 independent units, each with a different community setting (food, clothes, transportation, housing, school, health, post office, telephone, banking, employment). Each unit introduces and practices the same set of basic grammatical structures. Cycle II repeats the same 10 community settings,

but presents a more difficult set of structures. No fixed order is inherent in these materials, since the structures and vocabulary are introduced as new information in each unit, which makes the text ideal for Adult Education programs with open-enrollment or sporadic attendance. The teacher's manual is good, with many useful suggestions. However, inexperienced teachers will have to spend some time in preparation.

In addition to the materials listed above, the companies listed below are publishers known for their Adult Education materials, many of which are based on the Adult Performance Level competencies. Although these materials are not specifically designed for ESL students, they are written at lower-grade reading levels and are often quite adaptable for use in the ESL classroom. You might be interested in sending for their catalogues.

Follett Publishing Company
P.O. Box 5705
Chicago, IL 60680
312/666-5858

Frank E. Richards Publishing Company, Inc.
P.O. Box 66
Pheonix, N.Y. 13135
315/695-7261

Hopewell Books, Inc.
1670 Sturbridge Drive
R.D. #1
Sewickley, PA 15143
412/366-3287

Janus Book Publishers
3541 Investment Blvd., Suite 5
Hayward, CA 94545
415/785-9625
800/227-2375

New Readers Press
Box 131
Syracuse, N.Y. 13210
315/679-7300

P.A.R. Incorporated
Abbott Park Place
Providence, R.I. 02903
401/331-0130
800/556-7277

Steck-Vaughn Company
P.O. Box 2028
Austin, TX 78768
512/476-6721